

R E M A R K S

Careful review and examination of the subject application are noted and appreciated.

The present invention concerns a method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system. The method generally comprises the steps of (a) receiving an approval for authorizing a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database, (b) determining whether the particular billing code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes each having a second budget amount, (c) authorizing the second budget amount associated with the particular billing code in response to the particular billing code matching one of the second plurality of billing codes, and (d) authorizing the first budget amount associated with the particular billing code in response to the particular billing code matching none of the second plurality of billing codes.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Applicant's representative and Examiner Bui had a telephone interview on October 16, 2002. Applicant's representative requested clarification of the various 112 issues. No clarification was given. No agreement was reached.

SUPPORT FOR THE CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Support for the claim amendments can be found, for example, on page 35 lines 11-14, page 38 lines 15-16, page 39 lines 4-7, page 39 line 18 through page 40 line 2, page 40 lines 9-15, page 41 lines 5-7, page 42 lines 13-28, and page 43 lines 1-11 as originally filed. Thus, no new matter has been added.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112, FIRST PARAGRAPH

The rejection of claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, has been obviated, in part, by appropriate amendment and traversed, in part, and should be withdrawn.

While most of the rejections are not understandable and/or understood, Applicant's representative directs the Examiner to pages 30-43 of the specification for support for the claim elements. In particular, support for "a first billing code" can be found on page 37, line 14 (e.g., P-PATAPP).

Support for "a first budget database" can be found on page 37, line 11 (e.g., a default task budget database).

Support for "a first plurality of billing codes" can be found on page 37, lines 12-13 (e.g., with corresponding budget amounts and **billing codes**).

Support for "a first plurality of budget amounts" can be found on page 37, lines 12-13 (e.g., with corresponding **budget amounts** and billing codes).

Support for "a second budget database" can be found on page 37, line 18 (e.g., a firm task budget database).

The phrase "a billing amount associated with said first billing code" has been removed from claim 4.

Support for "an electronic spreadsheet" can be found on page 41, lines 19-20 (e.g., an electronic spreadsheet file).

Support for "a billing amount" can be found on page 41 line 28 (e.g., the amounts billed).

The phrase "a first budget amount" has been changed to "an authorized amount" which can be found on page 42, lines 14-15 (e.g., the amount that was authorized).

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112, SECOND PARAGRAPH

The rejection of claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, has been obviated, in part, by appropriate amendment and traversed, in part, and should be withdrawn.

The use of the prefixes "first" and "second" in the claims is a customary approach for distinguishing among similar named elements.

The phrase "a first billing code" has been changed to "a particular billing code" in claims 1 and 8 so as to distinguish from the billing codes in the first database and the billing codes in the second database for the sake of the claims.

The phrase "determining whether said first billing code in present a first budget database" in claims 1 and 8 has been amended. Since claim 1 is a method claim and claim 8 is a means for claim, reciting the functionality is sufficient. Providing structure to explain how the claimed functionality is performed is not mandatory in method and means for type claims (e.g., see 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6).

Claims 1 and 8 have been amended such that the phrases "a first" is used where "a second" also exists. Therefore, the claims include a first and a second plurality of billing codes, a first and a second database, and a first and a second amount.

Antecedent basis for "said first plurality of billing codes" is provided in step a of claim 1 and the first means for element of claim 8. The phrase "approving payment of the budget amount" (now "authorizing said first budget amount") is included in claims 1 and 8 which are a method claim and a means for claim, respectively. Claiming structure to provide a mechanism for performing the claimed functionality is not mandatory in method and means for type claims (e.g., see 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6).

Antecedent basis for "said first billing code" (now "a particular billing code") is provided in step a of claim 1 and the first means for element of claim 8. The claims 1 and 8 have been amended such that the phrase "a second budget database" (now "a second database") is first recited in step b of claim 1 and the second means for element of claim 8.

A common definition of "task" is work assigned to something or someone. An example of a task is shown on page 37, line 13 of the specification (e.g., prepare and file a patent application).

The phrase "checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill" has been eliminated from claims 3 and 10 but remains in claims 17 and 23. Since claims 17 and 23 are means for and method type claims, providing structure to explain how the claimed functionality is performed is not mandatory (e.g., see 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6).

The phrase "further comprising the step/means of checking whether the billing amount matches the budget amount associated with said first billing code" has been eliminated by cancelling claims 5, 6, 12 and 13.

Antecedent basis for "said first billing code" (now "said billing code") is provided in the first means element in claim 15 and step a in claim 21. Since claims 15 and 21 are a means for and

a method claim, providing structure to explain how the claimed functionality is performed is not mandatory (e.g., see 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6). The phrase "a first budget amount" has been changed to "an authorized amount" which is supported on page 42, lines 14-15 of the specification. Support for determining the authorized amount can be found on page 39 line 22 through page 40 line 2 and page 41 lines 5-7 of the specification.

The claim elements using the word "if" have been amended into appropriate claim language such as "in response to". Since claims 18 and 21 are a means for and a method type claim, providing structure to explain how the claimed functionality is performed is not mandatory (e.g., see 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6).

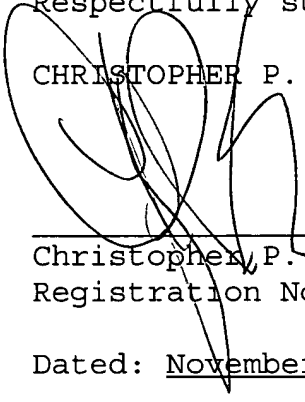
Accordingly, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action by the Examiner is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner is respectfully invited to call the Applicants' representative at 586-498-0670 should it be deemed beneficial to further advance prosecution of the application.

If any additional fees are due, please charge Deposit
Account No. 12-2252.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

1. (AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system, said method comprising the steps of:

a. receiving an approval [inputting a bill, said bill comprising] for authorizing a [first] particular billing code of a
5 first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount
stored in a first database;

b. determining whether said [first] particular billing code is present in a [first budget] second database[, said first budget database] comprising a [first] second plurality of billing
10 codes [and a first plurality of budget amounts, wherein each billing code of said first plurality of billing codes has an associated] each having a second budget amount [from said first plurality of budget amounts]; [and]

c. [further processing said bill as follows: i. if said
15 first billing code is present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of the] authorizing said second budget amount associated with said [first] particular billing code [in said first budget database] in response to said particular billing
code matching one of said second plurality of billing codes; and

20 d. [ii. if said first billing code is not present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of a] authorizing said first budget amount associated [to] with said

[first] particular billing code in [a second budget database]
response to said particular billing code matching none of said
25 second plurality of billing codes.

2. (AMENDED) The method of claim 1, wherein said
[first] particular billing code is associated with a task.

3. (AMENDED) The method of claim 2, further comprising
the step of:

generating an authorization form for [checking whether]
said task [has been completed] before [approving payment of said
5 bill] determining whether said particular billing code is present
in said second database.

4. (AMENDED) The method of claim 1, [wherein said
bill] further [comprises] comprising the step of:

receiving a selection of a [billing amount] firm
associated with said second budget database prior to determining
5 whether said [first] particular billing code is present in said
second database.

8. (AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling
accounts payable, said system comprising:

[a.] means for receiving an approval [inputting a bill that comprises] comprising a [first] particular billing code of a
5 first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount
stored in a first database;

[b.] means for determining whether said [first] particular billing code is present in a [first budget] second database [that comprises] comprising a [first] second plurality of
10 billing codes [and a first plurality of budget amounts, wherein each billing code of said first plurality of billing codes has an associated] each having a second budget amount [from said first plurality of budget amounts]; [and]

[c.] means for [further processing said bill as follows:
15 i. if said first billing code is present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of the] authorizing said second budget amount associated with said [first] particular billing code [in said first budget database] in response to said particular
billing code matching one of said second plurality of billing
20 codes; and

means for [ii. if said first billing code is not present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of a] authorizing said first budget amount associated [to] with said [first] particular billing code [in a second budget database] in

25 response to said particular billing code matching none of said
second plurality of billing codes.

9. (AMENDED) The system of claim 8, wherein said
[first] particular billing code is associated with a task.

10. (AMENDED) The system of claim 9, further comprising:
means for generating an authorization form for [to check
whether] said task [has been completed before approving payment of
said bill].

11. (AMENDED) The system of claim 8, [wherein said bill]
further [comprises] comprising:
means for receiving a selection of a [billing amount]
firm associated with said [first billing code] second database.

15. (AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling
accounts payable, said system comprising:

[a.] means for receiving [inputting] a bill [that
comprises] comprising a billing code and a billing amount
5 associated with said billing code;

[b.] means for determining [a first budget] an authorized amount associated with said first billing code from a [budget] database; and

[c.] means for [further processing said bill as follows:

10 i. if said first budget amount is the same as said billing amount, approving payment of said first the budget amount; and ii. if said first budget amount is more than said billing amount,] approving payment of said billing amount in response to said billing amount not exceeding said authorized amount.

16. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said [first] billing code is associated with a task.

17. (AMENDED) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

means [to check] for checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

18. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, [wherein said means for] further [processing said bill further comprises] comprising:

means [to] for not [approve] approving payment [if] in
5 response to said [first budget] authorized amount [is] being less
than said billing amount.

19. (AMENDED) The system of claim 18, further
comprising:

means [to] for automatically [generate] generating a
communication [if] in response to [payment is] not [approved]
5 approving payment.

20. (AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said bill
[is in the form of] comprises an electronic spreadsheet [and said
means for inputting the bill comprises means for inputting the
electronic spreadsheet into the computer system].

21. (AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based
system for handling accounts payable, said method comprising the
steps of:

a. receiving [inputting] a bill [that comprises]
5 comprising a billing code and a billing amount associated with said
billing code;

b. determining [a first budget] an authorized amount associated with said [first] billing code from a [budget] database; and

10 c. [further processing said bill as follows: i. if said first budget amount is the same as said billing amount, approving payment of said first the budget amount; and ii. if said first budget amount is more than said billing amount,] approving payment of said billing amount in response to said billing amount not
15 exceeding said authorized amount.

22. (AMENDED) The method of claim [15] 21, wherein said [first] billing code is associated with a task.

23. (AMENDED) The method of claim [16] 22, further comprising the step of:

checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

24. (AMENDED) The method of claim [15] 21, [wherein said step of further processing said bill] further [comprises] comprising the step of:

not approving payment [if] in response to said [first
5 budget] authorized amount [is] being less than said billing amount.

25. (AMENDED) The [system] method of claim [15] 21, wherein said bill [is in the form of] comprises an electronic spreadsheet [and said step of inputting the bill comprises inputting the electronic spreadsheet].

26. (NEW) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:

calculating a due date for completion of said task.

27. (NEW) The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of:

automatically sending said authorization form with said due date to a selected firm.

28. (NEW) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of:

entering one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount into a third database.

29. (NEW) The system of claim 10, further comprising:
means for calculating a due date for completion of said
task.

30. (NEW) The system of claim 15, further comprising:
means for approving payment of said authorized amount in
response to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.

31. (NEW) The method of claim 21, further comprising the
step of:

approving payment of said authorized amount in response
to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.